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Provisional summary record (partial)* of the 24th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 8 July 2008, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Lima (Vice-President) ..... (Cape Verde)

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting. A panel discussion was conducted.

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In the absence of Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), Mr. Lima (Cape Verde), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

The role of the United Nations system in implementing the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2007 of the Council (*continued*) (E/2008/21 and E/2008/77)

1. **Mr. Stelzer** (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, in the light of relevant General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 61/16 (E/2008/77), said that at the conferences of the 1990s and the Millennium Summit, a global consensus on policies and actions for advancing poverty eradication and sustainable development had been reached. Development issues had been brought to the forefront of the multilateral debate, giving renewed impetus to the Organization's work in the economic, social and related fields. Although the focus of the conferences had varied, the issues addressed were interlinked. Since the agreed goals and targets could be achieved only as part of a comprehensive United Nations development agenda, conference follow-up mechanisms had framed their work around the internationally agreed development goals and had adopted a comprehensive approach.

2. The Council had played a central role throughout that process. At the 2005 World Summit, Member States had renewed their commitments and resolved to step up their efforts to implement the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). To that end, they had devised a stronger system whereby the Council and its subsidiary bodies operated in a unified manner within the single framework of the development agenda. The annual ministerial review had given the Council a powerful tool for translating the integrated, coordinated approach into substantive reviews of implementation.

3. The report highlighted progress on conference follow-up as it related to the theme of the 2008 annual ministerial review and the main policy issues discussed by the functional commissions; addressed the institutional aspects of follow-up processes; and discussed how to promote policy coherence and strengthen the link between policy and operations. Although the theme of the 2008 ministerial review had been adopted after most of the functional commissions had established their multi-year work programmes, they had contributed to that theme through their discussion of specific aspects of sustainable development: urbanization, agriculture and rural development, and the environmental statistics and indicators needed for a policy debate on climate change.

4. The report also described a number of procedural improvements that had facilitated the substantive work of the Council machinery. In particular, collaboration among the functional commissions had helped enhance policy coherence on cross-cutting issues, while the adoption of multi-year programmes by both the commissions and the Council had facilitated the engagement of all actors.

5. Since its launch in 2007, the annual ministerial review — the purpose of which was to strengthen accountability by providing a forum for reviewing and renewing commitments and by mobilizing and maintaining the momentum needed to achieve agreed goals — had strengthened substantive integration and the Council system's ability to work in a more coordinated manner.

6. The annual review's global aspect provided a high-level annual overview, while country presentations and country-led meetings offered a national and regional perspective. By focusing on cross-sectoral themes common to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences, the review provided the Council with a vehicle that was both specific, and sufficiently comprehensive to provide a substantive review of the implementation of conferences and their follow-up processes.

7. In order to have a real impact on people's livelihood, the United Nations system's conceptual and standard-setting work must be translated into progress at the country level. The national voluntary presentations provided an opportunity for countries to learn from each other's experiences in implementing national development strategies; linking the discussion of policy options to specific country experiences brought the Council closer to bridging the divide

between the normative and operational work of the United Nations.

8. The annual ministerial review had made the process of integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences more substantive and visible while strengthening the Council's engagement with its functional commissions and with United Nations system funds, programmes and specialized agencies. During its current session, the Council would need to discuss the way forward with regard to reporting on the integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences. As the integrated substantive review was now being pursued through the annual ministerial review process and as procedural improvements to follow-up processes had been completed for the time being, the Council might wish to triennialize the report on integrated conference follow-up so as to provide a reasonable time period before the next overall review of that issue. Any structural and procedural changes aimed at making the Council system more coherent and integrative might then be reviewed at regular intervals.

9. **Mr. Keberet** (Observer for Ethiopia), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the poverty and hunger faced on a massive scale by the developing world, particularly Africa, was being aggravated by international financial instability and soaring food and energy prices. The Council's coordination segment must address those unprecedented challenges, through system-wide collective action in an integrated, coordinated fashion. The United Nations system should play a proactive role, rather than simply responding to needs as they arose, and should pursue its efforts to coordinate early collective responses. It was important for the coordination segment to deliver action- and results-oriented guidelines on major coordination issues.

10. The 2007 Ministerial Declaration addressed the need to strengthen efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger through global partnerships and system-wide approaches and underscored the importance of international support in order to increase resources for development and build developing countries' capacity. The Group noted that the Organization was endeavouring to address related challenges in a comprehensive manner and appreciated the efforts of various United Nations agencies to coordinate their activities.

11. The Group welcomed the recent establishment of the Secretary-General's High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis and the High-level Conference on World Food Security, held in Rome in June 2008. It commended the Organization's efforts to help African countries ensure food security by designing specific national and regional programmes under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and expressed its appreciation to the Secretary-General for launching the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Gap Task Force and the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Africa Steering Group. Both initiatives would provide important inputs to the high-level event on the MDGs and the high-level meeting on Africa's development needs, scheduled for September 2008.

12. In that connection, he drew attention to the African Union Declaration on Responding to the Challenges of High Food Prices and Agriculture Development, which had been adopted at the eleventh ordinary session of the African Union, held at Sharm El-Sheikh from 30 June to 1 July 2008. The declaration called, inter alia, for a global partnership to address the causes and effects of the current food crisis and for the immediate launching of a high-level dialogue between food exporters and importers from developed and developing countries. The international community should continue to promote the Declaration's objectives and support its implementation so as to ensure an effective, sustained response to the challenges of high food prices and agricultural development in Africa.

13. The Council should provide its subsidiary bodies with guidance on promoting coordination within their respective mandates and areas of competence and, the United Nations system should improve its cooperation and coordination with the economic commissions and other regional entities in order to ensure that global challenges were addressed effectively. Existing frameworks and instruments for country-level support, such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), should be strengthened further in an effort to streamline system activities aimed at responding to countries' development needs, strengthening national ownership and building capacity; such activities should be implemented and evaluated under the UNDAF umbrella in order to avoid duplication.

14. Lastly, the Council's review of the role of the United Nations in implementing the 2007 Ministerial Declaration should take account of the many new and emerging challenges to development and of the need to place special emphasis on the development needs of Africa. The Council should further strengthen its guiding role in addressing those issues through a system-wide coordinated approach.

15. **Ms. Kharashun** (Belarus) said that her delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report and considered that eradicating poverty and hunger was a key objective which could not be achieved without a global partnership for development. The United Nations should join with other multilateral bodies to further international development cooperation.

16. International trade was a key driver of economic growth and poverty reduction. Her delegation shared the Secretary-General's view that liberalization could not be considered a panacea and should be accompanied by development policies for industry and other productive sectors in order to be effective. Development activities should be directed by genuinely national strategies reflecting the situation on the ground.

17. While the Doha Round of international trade negotiations could play a significant role in eradicating poverty, the current economic and commercial landscape was afflicted by unilateral coercion and a tendency for the right to join the World Trade Organization to be decided by monopoly. The use of unilateral measures to exert pressure in connection with non-economic issues was incompatible with international legal standards; it constituted interference in the domestic affairs of States and stood in the way of achieving development goals.

18. Her delegation supported the 2007 Ministerial Declaration's emphasis on the role of employment in reducing poverty and the central place it occupied in national development strategies. It welcomed the joint efforts of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) to promote full and productive employment and decent work for all. The contribution of the regional commissions, which knew the local situation and could propose suitable methods of implementing policy, should be increased.

19. While encouraging progress had been made in meeting the MDGs, new challenges threatened to make it difficult to reach the 2015 target date. The social pressures caused by sharp rises in staple food prices threatened to negate gains in combating poverty and hunger. Her delegation therefore welcomed the establishment of the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis.

20. A more selective approach to alternative sources of energy should be taken, using technology to ensure that biofuel production did not adversely affect the market for food, that renewable energy was produced without harm to the environment and that the use of alternative and renewable energy sources was combined with energy conservation. However, such innovation required initial investment beyond the means of many countries, especially developing countries. Her delegation had suggested that thematic debates on the subject should be included in the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, in light of the central role of the United Nations in providing all countries with access to energy-efficient technology and new and renewable energy sources.

21. **Mr. Maboundou** (Congo), referring to the Secretary-General's report on the role of the United Nations system in implementing the Ministerial Declaration of the high-level segment of the 2007 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council (E/2008/21), welcomed the system's progress in developing and pursuing more comprehensive approaches to the eradication of poverty and hunger, particularly in the areas of employment generation, trade, and rural and agricultural development. However, more needed to be done to integrate sustainable development and science and technology dimensions into United Nations programmes and activities in support of national poverty eradication efforts.

22. In addition to meeting the targets set in the 2007 Ministerial Declaration, the United Nations should ensure that development partners understood each country's specific needs and situation so that they would be better equipped to help developing countries design coherent, viable national development policies and enter the global economy, primarily by attaining the MDGs. He welcomed the establishment by the Secretary-General of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Gap Task Force and the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Africa Steering Group. His

delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report.

23. While proper implementation of the initiatives emanating from the decisions taken at the World Summit on Sustainable Development would require considerable funds, it was even more important to improve coordination under United Nations auspices in order to avoid duplication; he welcomed the Organization's growing involvement in initiatives such as the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD).

24. The Government of the Congo had recently approved the country's poverty reduction strategy paper. That document, the framework for national development activities, had enabled it to take action in the areas covered in the 2007 Ministerial Declaration. In an attempt to mitigate the impact of the global food crisis, his Government had adopted a national food security programme aimed at boosting production capacity at all levels and an agricultural emergency programme for the period 2008-2009, which contained a series of measures aimed at addressing the rise in the price of essential items.

25. Those programmes, which were designed to mirror the UNDP Human Development Report at the national level, would benefit from a better understanding of complementarities between social and agricultural policies; technological innovation, poverty eradication and energy policies; and bioenergy and food security policies. In turn, a better understanding of national, regional and subregional challenges — something that the United Nations hoped to gain by promoting multi-stakeholder approaches and partnerships — would give development projects the best chance of success.

26. **Mr. Ibrahim** (Observer for Nigeria) said that while there had been modest success in implementing the 2007 Ministerial Declaration, progress had been hampered by shortcomings in the global partnership for development, a lack of coherence and coordination in the United Nations system approach and the multiple crises caused by international financial turmoil, high food and fuel prices and the devastating effects of climate change.

27. Eradicating poverty and hunger was critical to the larger goal of sustainable development and required coordination of development policies at the national, regional and global levels. The establishment of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Gap Task Force to track commitments made under Goal 8 of the MDGs was a positive step, as was the establishment of the MDG Africa Steering Group; its focus on the need to meet existing commitments to Africa would help the continent achieve all the MDGs.

28. Nigeria's experience had shown that increased agricultural production and improved infrastructures were critical to eradicating poverty because of the intrinsic links among agriculture, rural development and employment generation. A strategy that focused on both small-scale farmers and mechanized farming would help address the food crisis and bring a green revolution to Africa. Infrastructure improvements would not only boost agriculture but promote industrial development, while inclusive international trade, aid for trade, foreign investment in production, transfer of renewable technologies and equitable disbursement of the climate change Adaptation Fund would promote sustainable development and achievement of the MDGs.

29. **Ms. Johnson** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that while the report of the Secretary-General usefully summarized the work of the United Nations system and gave prominence to a number of issues of particular concern to the International Federation, it failed to highlight the importance of partnerships at national level with community-based organizations that had a good understanding of local priorities and challenges. The emphasis on partnerships lay at the root of the declaration, "Together for Humanity", adopted at the November 2007 International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which stressed that current challenges could not be addressed by any one Government or organization.

30. The International Federation would have liked to see the report of the Secretary-General take a more forthright approach to climate change by emphasizing adaptation in developing countries, particularly the least developed countries and the small island developing States, and by stressing capacity-building needs at community level, where the International Federation was extremely active.

31. As diseases and other public health challenges crossed political boundaries, national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies worked in partnership with governments to prepare for crises such as outbreaks of avian influenza and the associated human pandemic; to

that end, formal and informal working relationships had been established with the World Health Organization's headquarters and regional offices.

32. In conclusion, while the International Federation shared the concerns expressed in the 2007 Ministerial Declaration and in the report of the Secretary-General, it believed that the United Nations system should look more widely for partners and should better reflect such partnerships in reports to the Council, particularly in light of Goal 8 of the MDGs on the global partnership for development.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 3.55 p.m.

A panel discussion on the topic of "the role of the Economic and Social Council in addressing violence against women in all its forms and manifestations: a dialogue with the chairpersons of the functional commissions" followed. The panel was chaired by Mr. Antonio Pedro Monteiro Lima (Cape Verde), Vice-President of the Council, and moderated by Mr. Olivier Belle (Belgium), Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women. The Panellists were Ms. Lorena Giménez (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), Vice-Chairperson of the Commission for Social Development, Mr. Pali Lehohla (South Africa), Chairperson of the Statistical Commission and Ms. Elena Zuñiga (Mexico), Chairperson of the Commission on Population and Development.